

GREEN RIVER KILLER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. REICHERT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. REICHERT. Mr. Speaker, I am a new Member of this body, and I am proud and humble to serve the 8th District of the State of Washington. I am also honored and privileged today to address this body.

My first address is on a very serious note, but I think it is a necessary one for us to talk about because it affects and impacts the young women and children in our community. It is the future of our country.

For 33 years I had the privilege of serving in law enforcement in King County which is the Seattle area of Washington State. And I served in a number of different capacities, but in one of those capacities I served as the lead investigator in the most notorious serial killer case in this Nation's history.

Mr. Speaker, we had a monster who was stalking our young women and children in our community. These were young women and children who were lost; children who were afraid; who in some cases were driven from their homes by domestic violence, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, emotional and physical abuse. Some, though, were lured away from their homes by people who preyed on their weakness and their vulnerability. They were lured into an environment of street life where drugs and alcohol are rampant, where prostitution is rampant; and they were told they were going to live the life of luxury, fast money, fast cars, and freedom. Instead, their lives ended. They just ended. The promises for a better life by these predators were all lies.

Our community was gripped by fear by this monster who literally grabbed our children by the throat and snuffed out their lives, their hopes, and their dreams. This monster struck at the very hearts of our communities: our children. And my purpose today is to stand before you, Mr. Speaker, to tell this story, to honor the victims so that we never forget the victims, to remind us of all the families who are still suffering the losses of their loved ones who have been sentenced to a life sentence without their loved ones.

Lastly, it is to recognize, Mr. Speaker, and officially thank those who worked so hard and so long to solve this case. The nearly 90 detectives in the King County Sheriffs Office which is the lead agency that worked this case for nearly 20 years, the Seattle Police Department, the Kent Police Department, the Washington State Patrol and the State Patrol Lab; the medical examiner's office, the FBI, scientists, civilian staff, volunteers, explorers, search and rescue, prosecutor's office in King County led by Norm Maleng, and the defense team.

I would be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I did not mention that just last week, as most everyone is aware, the so-called BTK killer was arrested in Wichita, Kansas. I think this House should also recognize and congratulate the community and the law enforcement/criminal justice system in Wichita for bringing that case to a close and bringing some answers to questions that the families of these victims have been asking for over 25 years.

These monsters are in our communities, and I want to tell the story briefly. Sometimes it takes me almost 3 hours to go through this, but I have only an hour, so you will get a brief overview of this case. Let me just tell you about the numbers.

□ 1515

Now, I was 31 years old when I started this case back in 1982 with the first victim. But 48 guilty pleas, 44 recovered victims; four of the victims are unidentified, four are still missing. This case was open for 7,500 days. Over 90-plus King County detectives worked on this case. 15,500 photographs were taken. Over 1,500 cassette tapes, over 10,000 items of evidence were collected. Over half a million pieces of paper were put together.

Twenty to 30 people worked full-time once the arrest was made in our office for about 6 months to complete the document imaging process that cost us nearly \$1.2 million. There were 40,000 suspect tips, almost 13,000, actually 40,000 tip sheets on a variety of different leads, but almost 13,000 tips on different people as suspects.

Imagine working one murder case, having 10 suspects and trying to figure out who out of that 10 is that one person who committed the murder. We have 50 murders and nearly 13,000 suspects. And they ranged from attorneys to police officers to people who worked for the post office and truck drivers and iron workers and every walk of life that you could think of.

King County Sheriff's Office spent \$2.8 million in 2002 on this case. The prosecutor's office spent a million and a half. The defense spent \$2.5 million. There were 12 prosecutors that worked on this case, a combined team. There were almost 20 King County sheriffs deputies and detectives and civilians who worked on that case. After the arrest was made, the defense team had about 16 team members to their effort. And all of this for one monster, one defendant, one person who pled guilty to 48 lives. And it is, in my opinion, he has killed nearly 75, probably more than that.

King County, if you do not know, is in the State of Washington right on Puget Sound. The city of Seattle is the county seat. Green River runs south of Seattle through the countryside and toward the foot hills of the Cascade Mountains.

This case started on July 15, 1982, when the first body, Wendy Coffield, was found floating in the river south of

Seattle with a ligature around her neck, a 15-year-old girl from our community.

On August 12, 1982, I was called to the river for the second body, for the first body was in the sheriff's jurisdiction. Debra Bonner was found floating in the river, and she had been strangled.

Three days later, I was called back to the river once again. A rafter had been floating down the river. He looked on the shore line and thought he had found two mannequins. And as he floated down the river, he got closer and discovered that these mannequins, these images, were not mannequins but human bodies.

And as he looked up on the river bank there was a man standing there and there was a pickup truck parked at a turn-out. And the man on the river bank waved at the man on the raft. And they exchanged pleasantries. The man on the river bank walked up the bank, drove away in his truck as the man on the raft waved goodbye.

The man on the raft then called the Police Department. I showed up, and as I was processing the scene, I found a third body on the river bank that we did not know about, that the rafter had not seen.

That man on the river bank was the man that we eventually arrested. And I am not going to say his name today, because I do not want to honor him by having his name mentioned in this very historical place and place of honor.

The evidence we collected off of Wendy Coffield and some of these early victims was very important. This evidence was collected in 1982. It came together in 1987. In 1987 we finally got enough evidence together where we were able to search the home of the person that we finally arrested. A lot of things, pieces of the puzzle started to come together. We collected hundreds of lists. We collected lists of people who were arrested for patronizing prostitutes. We arrested people, or we actually gathered lists of people who were arrested for assaulting women during that period of time. We collected lists of people who were known to fish in the Green River, who had fishing licenses. We collected lists of people who worked in the area, who lived in the area, who were stopped by the police in that area. So we collected list after list after list.

And back in those days we had no computers. You think about 1982 when I started this case, we had no computers. There was no such thing as DNA. There was no automated fingerprint identification system, which is an automated system that compares fingerprints today. Most people are aware of that. In fact, in 1982 I was managing this case on 3 by 5 note cards on a Rolodex file. And a lot of times when I mention the Rolodex file, especially in junior high or high school classes, a hand usually goes up and the question is asked, Sheriff, what is a Rolodex file? That is how far technology has come.

This case was one of hard work, dedication, commitment, and let me tell you, just pure frustration. The detectives, investigators, scientists, and the community involved in helping to solve this case never gave up. They were dedicated to solving this case, to finding the person responsible for this case.

There were so many great suspects in this case. We followed one suspect for nearly 3 or 4 months. We discovered that as we looked at each one of these suspects that fit the profile that the FBI had provided to us to a certain degree were so interesting and were such good suspects that they would use and could use our resources for weeks or months at a time.

In 1982, after we found the three bodies on Sunday, on that following Monday, August 16, we formed the first task force of 25 detectives within the sheriff's office. We thought we had six victims and we worked through 1982. And by the fall of 1982 the administration already started to talk about cutting back and reducing our effort because they felt we had identified the suspect.

By the end of 1982, when we thought we had six victims, we actually had 16 young women killed. We did not even know about the other 10 yet.

In 1983 we spent most of our time collecting bodies, sad to say. Reports of found skeletal remains were coming in continuously. And so we fell behind in following up our tips. And finally, by the end of 1983, a new sheriff was appointed and he decided, you know what, it is time to do something. It is time to investigate this case properly.

He brought a task force together in January of 1984. It was called the enhanced task force. Because by the end of 1983 we thought we had 13 victims, when in reality we had 27 women killed. So we put together a task force made up of the FBI and some of the agencies that I had listed earlier, to nearly come to a number of 80 investigators and personnel who were working on this case together almost 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for years.

And as this case went on, we discovered more bodies. We discovered a body of a young woman who was 9 months pregnant who met this killer on the streets. And here, stop and think about this for a minute. Some people ask why in the world was this case so hard to solve?

Let me just give you some of the reasons. Men who are preying on young women and young girls on the streets for prostitution have picked the most vulnerable victims in our community, in our society.

The only thing they have to do is to drive up on a street corner, roll down the window, open the door and make a deal for sex, and it only lasts a matter of seconds. And the victim is in the car. There is no struggle. There is no screaming. There is nothing that calls attention to the exchange that just took place.

And this young girl gets in that car and drives away into the night, never to be seen again. And in some cases, the victim's body was not found for months and, in one case, 6 years later, the body is finally found.

And so when you find the victim, you identify the victim. And then now as an investigator, as the team continues to move forward and investigate this case, they have to go backwards in time to figure out where this victim was last seen.

And if you are lucky enough to figure out that this was the street corner that this person disappeared from, then you have to determine who the witnesses were, who was there to watch this happen, to watch her drive off into the night; who might have a description of the suspect vehicle or the suspect.

And when you get back to that street corner, you discover that your witnesses are street people, homeless people who are just trying to take care of themselves, who are paying attention to their own lives, who in some cases were drug addicts and alcoholics themselves.

The victims that we needed to identify and learn a lot about in most cases had more than one name, five, six, seven, eight, nine, 10 different names. Sometimes we really did not know which was their true name until months later. They had different birth dates, different addresses, different vehicles and license plates associated with them. They changed their appearance.

The witnesses, if we were lucky again to find those witnesses, all fell into that same category. It would take us months, sometimes years, to track down a person that we knew as a certain name and discover a year later or 2 years later they were actually another person, and they had ID belonging to someone else, and they had a totally different appearance.

So again, I want to stress how patient and how diligent and how persistent the investigators were in this case. And as we moved forward through 1984, still in a mode, really, of collecting human remains, and we were working also on the leads, still falling behind with every discovery of a new body, but hoping that each time we found a new human being, a human remain, hoping that that would be the case that would supply us with the evidence that we needed to solve this case, to break this case open.

Now, I want to mention too that we were quite organized during those days. And I think too, Mr. Speaker, like the BTK case, I heard the chief of police of Wichita say the other day that sometimes the news media was quite critical of the efforts and questioned the capability, ability, and talents of the law enforcement agencies in that region.

We were no different. We were questioned and criticized and ridiculed, and in some cases to the detriment of the investigation. In fact, there is one po-

litical cartoon that calls the Green River task force the Green River task farce.

And what happened when that kind of media attention and that criticism would be directed at us, it did not instill a lot of confidence in the community in our ability, when what we wanted was the people in the community to cooperate with us and have confidence that if they called us, their leads would be followed up and they would be followed up.

But they almost got to the point where they were hearing that so much that they said, why call? They are never going to catch the guy. They do not know what they are doing. And they may have had that one little bit of information.

Just to give you a little tip too on some information on how devious this killer was, in one case, he killed a young girl, another teenager, left her body near Sea-Tac Airport.

□ 1530

He came back later. He removed her skull and transported her body part to Portland, Oregon. This is a man who had no respect for human life whatsoever. It also points out the complications of this case when you have a person with that kind of a mind trying to play tricks on the community and the police department, interrupting their abilities and throwing them off in their attempts to solve this case.

Now, the case went on from 1982 through 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990 and, finally, the task force is down to one person and we are waiting for that one piece of evidence; the evidence we collected in 1982 from a ligature of one of the victims floating in the river, some paint spheres; the evidence we collected from the three bodies that I talked about near the river bank and the one on the river bank, the DNA.

Actually, back then, it was bodily fluids. We had no concept of what DNA was. It was never talked about. It had not even been discovered yet as a possible tool in this sort of investigation until the late 1980s.

In 1987, we searched the home of the man we finally killed. And during that search we collected everything we could in that home, in the yard, and we asked him to chew on a piece of gauze. We took that gauze and we put it in a test tube. And when DNA science finally evolved to the point where we felt it was safe enough to test the samples that we had collected over the years, we submitted the gauze, we submitted the DNA samples from the victims that I described, and we submitted other DNA samples of five top suspects. We submitted those samples and we came back with a match, a DNA hit from evidence that was taken in 1987 compared to evidence that was collected by the investigators and saved; frozen, preserved and stored.

We had over 10,000 items of evidence, and all of that evidence has been accounted for over these many years.

That evidence came together and identified a suspect and we arrested this man on November 30, 2001. We had him on four counts.

When we arrested him, we drove up to his place of work, where he worked for 31 years. He was married for over 13 years to the same woman. He was a member of the community. People were shocked, surprised, and amazed that he was identified as the person responsible for around 50 deaths. We arrested him. We drove up to him and we said, you are under arrest for the murder of four women connected with the Green River cases, and he shrugged his shoulders and he said, okay. He got into the police car and we took him to jail. He was not upset. It was not a big deal.

I share this with you to share a little of his personality. He is a psychopath, a pathological liar, and has no remorse whatsoever about the lives that he took. The women he killed, he killed because he could, and that is what his answer was to that question. When we arrested him, we spent 6 months interrogating him to try to pull out every piece of evidence and all information that we could.

There were three other cases we were able to charge him with, and that evidence came from microscopic paint spheres. Those paint spheres were collected in 1982. Let me give one example.

I mentioned first the body that took 6 years to find. In September of 1982, a young woman was missing. We found her body 6 years later. And as we were processing that scene, we found a piece of cloth at that site where she was buried. It was decomposing, and it decomposed to the point where if you were to try and lift it with your fingers, it would crumble between your fingertips and onto the ground. We collected that, put it together, and we saved it.

In 2002, when the science again was to the point where they could find those microscopic spheres and compare them to the paint at a trucking company where this suspect worked as a truck painter for 31 years, we were able to take that paint from that decomposing piece of cloth and the paint spheres from a ligature that was on a victim who was floating in the river. One might assume that the evidence on the victim had been washed away, but it still had microscopic paint spheres. We were able to collect those, have them examined by the scientists.

Those microscopic paint spheres in 1987 were also discovered in his locker. So we have a connection between three victims who had microscopic paint spheres attached to them, and we also had microscopic paint spheres that were found in his locker at work, which connected him back.

Once we had seven cases on him, his attorneys quickly came to us and said we want to talk to you. We were hoping for that, and I will tell you why. Most people might say this man, if anyone, and I would agree with this, if

anyone deserved the death penalty, this man deserved the death penalty. But one of the things that had happened over the years as we worked with the families is we had become friends with the family members. We were their link to their loved ones.

They had questions: Where is my daughter? Is she alive? People were still hoping their daughter could be found. If my daughter is dead, who killed her and why? And, Mr. Speaker, I would say that every one of us in this room today would say I want to know. I would want to know. I would want someone to talk to the guy and find out; find out why and where my daughter is buried. So we did.

We had choices of going forward with seven cases and following that through the court system. We had seven strong cases. But what if he was found not guilty? Stranger things have happened. What if he was found guilty and we went to the penalty phase and the jury decided to give him life in prison without parole. We only had seven cases solved.

We decided to take a chance and interview this monster, and we spent 6 months, as I said before, 6 months interviewing him and pulling out every piece of information and fact that we could about every one of these cases. The last day that I talked to him was on December 31, 2003, before he was sent to prison. I spoke to him for about an hour, and I will never forget what he said to me, the last thing he said. He said, I have killed 71 and you are too stupid to find the others. And it is my belief, as I said earlier, he has probably killed near 80.

So now you have an idea of the difficulty of this case. I have really only scratched the surface of how tough this case was. But the importance of bringing this case to the floor today, Mr. Speaker, is that we must never forget the victims. We must never forget the families whose pain still is being endured today, and we must always be able to say thank you to the men and women in law enforcement, the criminal justice system, and those who are in the forensic science field coming up with new and innovative ways every day to help law enforcement solve these cases, cases like the BTK case.

And then, as a reminder, we need to stop and think about why these young ladies are on the street? I mentioned earlier some of the reasons, but what can we do about it? Are we willing to do anything about it? Yes, there are people out there working with young people on the street, working with young people who are on drugs and alcohol, and we are trying to make a difference there, but it has to start earlier.

One of the places that does that in Seattle, just south of Seattle in a small town called Kent, where I grew up, is a place called the Pediatric Intensive Care Center. This facility takes in babies who have been born to drug-addicted mothers, some of these mothers

who have been on the street. These babies are placed into homes where they have a chance to live a life, a real life, the life that I talked about earlier: A life of hope, a life with dreams for those little girls who have dreams.

And you know what, it is our duty, Mr. Speaker, every one of us in this Nation, to protect those dreams, to make sure that the hopes and dreams of our children are not stolen away by something we might do at home and not stolen away by someone who lures them out of our homes with the promise of a better life somewhere else. It is our responsibility to step up and act.

People talk about human trafficking, and it is an international problem. Human trafficking is a problem right here in this country. It happens on our Nation's streets every day. I hope to join with my colleagues here in Congress to begin to make a difference in the lives of our children so that we can protect them and they can enjoy a life of freedom and safety.

I want to end, Mr. Speaker, by reading a list of each of the victims whose lives were taken by this monster in the northwest:

Marcia Fay Chapman; Cynthia Jean Hinds; and Opal Charmaine Mills. She's the one I found on the river bank.

Carol Ann Christensen, Wendy Lee Coffield, Gisele Ann Lovvorn, Debra Lynn Bonner, Marcia Fay Chapman, Cynthia Jean Hinds, Opal Charmaine Mills, Terry Rene Milligan, and Mary Bridget Meehan. She was the one 9 months pregnant.

Debra Lorraine Estes, Linda Jane Rule, Denise Darcel Bush, Shawnda Leea Summers, Shirley Marie Sherrill, Colleen Renee Brockman, Alma Ann Smith, Dolores Williams, Gail Lynn Mathews, Andrea Childers, Sandra Kay Gabbert, Kimi-Kai Pitsor, Marie Malvar, Carol Christensen, Martina Authorlee, Cheryl Wims, Yvonne Antosh, Carrie Rois, Constance Elizabeth Naon, Kelly Marie Ware, Tina Thompson, April Buttram, Debbie Abernathy, Tracy Winston, Maureen Sue Feeney, Mary Sue Bello, Pammy Avent, Delise Plager, Kimberly Nelson, Lisa Yates, Mary West, Cindy Smith, Patricia Barczak, Roberta Hayes, Marta Reeves, Patricia Yellow Robe.

And then there are four others who have not been identified: Unidentified victim number ten, unidentified victim number sixteen, unidentified victim number seventeen, and unidentified victim number twenty.

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APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES PAGE BOARD

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky). Pursuant to 2 U.S.C. 88b-3, and the order of the House of January 4, 2005, the Chair announces the Speaker's appointment of the following Members of the House to the House of Representatives Page Board: